decentralisation, simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and regions. With the changes in the international situation and the measures taken by the Government the target were achieved in 1999-2000.

Indian Patent Office

23. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Patent Office is faced with several major impediments and bottlenecks in its functioning;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to tone up its functioning so that it can effectively cope with increasing number of violations of patent laws from different quarters?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. the major impediments and bottlenecks being faced by the Patent Office are due to manual nature of operations, inadequate manpower and accommodation, limited facilities for international level search and examination and increasing backlog of patent applications.

(c) In order to address these problems, Government has undertaken modernisation of the Patent Offices in order to streamline and rationalise the procedure for grant of patents. This includes infrastructure and human resource development, re-engineering of work procedures, computerisation of operators, networking of offices, focus on clearance of backlog of pending applications and awareness creation. Several steps have already been taken for clearance of backlog of pending patent applications. These include action for recruitment of additional Examiners, hiring of additional accommodation for the patent offices and acquisition of additional computer equipments.

ITC monopoly in tobacco market

24. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether ITC monopoly in the market was leading to heavy lossses to